

Monkeypox

What is monkeypox?

Monkeypox is a rare disease caused by the monkeypox virus, which belongs to the same group of viruses as smallpox. Monkeypox virus was first found in laboratory monkeys in 1958. It has also been found in different kinds of African rodents.

Who gets monkeypox?

The first human cases of monkeypox in the United States occurred in the mid-west in 2003. Before 2003, the only human cases of monkeypox occurred in central and West Africa.

How is monkeypox spread?

Monkeypox may spread to people when they are bitten by or touch the blood, other body fluids, or rash of an animal infected with monkeypox. In the U.S. in 2003, monkeypox was reported among several people who had contact with sick pet prairie dogs that had contact with imported African rodents. Sometimes, monkeypox is spread from one person to another through very close contact or by touching body fluids of a person with monkeypox. In the U.S. in 2003, no one got sick from being in contact with another person with monkeypox. Objects, such as bedding or clothing, contaminated with the virus may also spread monkeypox.

What are the symptoms of monkeypox?

In humans, the signs and symptoms of monkeypox are similar to those of smallpox, but they are usually milder. Monkeypox causes fever, headache, backache, swollen lymph nodes (not usually seen in smallpox), sore throat, and cough. One to three days after the onset of fever, a blister-like rash usually appears first on the face and then spreads to other parts of the body. The blisters go through several stages before they get crusty, scab over and fall off. The illness usually lasts for 2 to 4 weeks. In rare cases, monkeypox can cause death.

How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?

Symptoms usually appear within 7 to 14 days after exposure.

How is monkeypox diagnosed?

Monkeypox is diagnosed through special laboratory tests done on samples taken from people or animals suspected of having monkeypox.

How is monkeypox treated?

Treatment consists of supportive care and relief of symptoms. No proven effective treatment exists to date, although some antiviral medications are being investigated for treating monkeypox.

Is there a vaccine for monkeypox?

The vaccine for smallpox may reduce the chance of getting monkeypox. Information about vaccination to prevent monkeypox is available through the state or local health department.

Where can I get more information about monkeypox?

More information about monkeypox is available on the Virginia Department of Health website at www.vdh.virginia.gov or through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov/ncidod/monkeypox.